

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1376, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO ESTABLISH THE WACO MAMMOTH NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF TEXAS.

APRIL 23, 2009

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1376, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Waco Mammoth National Monument in the State of Texas.

The Department supports H.R. 1376, with amendments described later in this testimony. H.R. 1376 would establish a new unit of the National Park System, the Waco Mammoth National Monument (monument), near the city of Waco, Texas. The bill directs the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to administer the monument in accordance with the laws applicable to the National Park System and to enter into cooperative agreements with Baylor University and the City of Waco to manage the monument. The bill also authorizes the Secretary to acquire land for the monument from willing sellers with donated or appropriated funds, transfer from another federal agency, or exchange. Lands owned by the State of Texas, or its political subdivisions, may only be acquired by donation or exchange. Finally, the Secretary is authorized to construct facilities on non-federal land within the boundaries of the monument and to complete a General Management Plan for the monument within three years after funds are made available.

The National Park Service (NPS) was directed to complete a Special Resource Study (SRS) of the Waco Mammoth site by Public Law 107-341. This study evaluated a 109-acre site owned by

the City of Waco and Baylor University and found that the site meets all the criteria for designation as a unit of the National Park System.

The Waco Mammoth Site area is located approximately 4.5 miles north of the center of Waco, near the confluence of the Brazos and the Bosque rivers. Baylor University has been investigating the site since 1978 after hearing about bones emerging from eroding creek banks that led to the uncovering of portions of five mammoths. Since then several additional mammoth remains have been uncovered - making this the largest known concentration of mammoths dying from the same event.

The discoveries have received international attention and many of the remains have been excavated and are in storage or still being researched. The SRS determined that the combination of both in situ articulated skeletal remains and the excavated specimens from the site represents the nation's first and only recorded nursery herd of Pleistocene mammoths. The resource possesses exceptional interpretive value and superlative opportunities for visitor enjoyment and scientific study.

From the time the site was discovered until the present, the University and the City have managed the site responsibly. The SRS examined a range of proposed options for the NPS involvement at the site. We believe that NPS joining in partnership with the city of Waco, Baylor University, and others would offer the most effective and cost efficient management of this unique resource.

If established based upon the management alternative recommended in the SRS, we estimate that the costs to create the monument would include \$8.1 million from the identified partners to develop the facilities at the monument with the NPS providing an additional \$600,000 for enhanced interpretive media. Total operational costs are estimated to be \$645,000 with the NPS contributing approximately \$345,000 for NPS staffing of four full-time equivalent positions and associated supplies, materials, and equipment. All funds are subject to NPS priorities and the availability of appropriations.

We recommend that H.R. 1376 be amended to include a definition of the map used to show the location and boundaries of the monument in Section 3. Also, we suggest that Section 4 be amended to include language stating that the monument is established as generally shown on the map and that the map is available for inspection at appropriate NPS offices. This will make the bill consistent with other similar legislation establishing new National Park System units. We will be happy to work with the subcommittee staff on these suggested amendments.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.